

What is claimed is:

1. A method for providing a user with comprehensive search results in response to queries entered by the user over a computer network, comprising:

a) providing access to a computer network associated with a plurality of electronic files containing information and a metadata database comprising identifying data for selectively accessing the electronic files;

b) prompting a user to enter a query;

c) identifying key terms contained in the query;

d) creating an expanded query to include additional terms pre-determined to be related to the key terms in the query;

e) identifying information that includes at least one of the terms in the expanded query;

f) prompting the user to select at least one item of information identified as including at least one of the terms in the expanded query; and

g) accessing an electronic file that contains the information selected by the user.

2. The method of claim 1 comprising the additional steps of:

a) providing a vocabulary bridge having electronic files including groups of terms for expanding a query entered by the user;

b) comparing key terms entered by the user as part of the query to the electronic files; and

c) adding to the query all terms in at least one group that contains at least one of the key terms to provide an expanded query containing both entered terms and unentered terms.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the electronic files include dictionaries, thesauri, and authority files.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein all of the terms contained within each individual group of terms are pre-determined to be related to each other.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the query is expanded to include a biological sequence of at least one term contained in the query.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the query is expanded to include an identifier identifying a biological sequence of at least one term contained in the query.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the query is expanded to include at least one linguistic translation of at least one term contained in the query.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the query is expanded to include at least one term associated with at least one term contained in the query.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the plurality of electronic files are all related to a preselected subject.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the preselected subject is biology.

11. The method of claim 1 comprising the additional step of assigning identifying information to the user to enable the user to subsequently access and manipulate the query and the selected information.

12. The method of claim 1 comprising the additional step of displaying to the user a synopsis of information identified as including at least one of the terms in the expanded query.

13. A method of enabling a user using a computer network to obtain comprehensive search results, comprising:

- a) accessing a computer network associated with a plurality of electronic files containing information and a metadata database comprising identifying data for selectively accessing the electronic files;
- b) identifying key terms contained in a query entered by a user over the computer network;
- c) creating an expanded query to include additional terms associated with the key terms;
- d) identifying information identified by at least one of the terms in the expanded query;
- e) enabling the user to select at least one item of information identified by at least one of the terms in the expanded query; and
- f) accessing an electronic file that contains the information selected by the user.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the plurality of electronic files include audio elements capable of being transmitted over a computer network.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein the plurality of electronic files include video elements capable of being transmitted over a computer network.

16. The method of claim 13 comprising the additional steps of:

- a) providing a vocabulary bridge having electronic files including groups of terms for expanding a query entered by the user;
- b) comparing key terms entered by the user as part of the query to the electronic files; and
- c) adding to the query all terms in at least one group that contains at least one of the key terms to provide an expanded query containing both entered terms and unentered terms.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the electronic files include dictionaries, thesauri, and authority files.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein all of the terms contained within each individual group of terms are pre-determined to be related to each other.

19. The method of claim 13 wherein the query is expanded to include a biological sequence of at least one term contained in the query.

20. The method of claim 13 wherein the query is expanded to include an identifier identifying a biological sequence of at least one term contained in the query.

21. The method of claim 13 wherein the query is expanded to include at least one linguistic translation of at least one term contained in the query.

22. The method of claim 13 wherein the query is expanded to include at least one term that has been pre-determined to be related to at least one term contained in the query.

23. The method of claim 13 wherein the plurality of electronic files are all related to a preselected subject.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the preselected subject is biology.

25. The method of claim 13 comprising the additional step of assigning identifying information to the user to enable the user to subsequently access and manipulate the query and the selected information.

26. The method of claim 13 comprising the additional step of displaying to the user a synopsis of information identified by at least one of the terms in the expanded query.

27. A system for providing users with comprehensive search results in response to a query entered by the user, comprising:

- a) an electronically accessible computer network including at least one server for providing access to information available through the computer network; and
- b) the computer network being associated with
 - a plurality of electronic files containing information;
 - a metadata database for accessing the electronic files; and
 - a vocabulary bridge for expanding a query entered by a user.

28. A system as in claim 27 wherein the vocabulary bridge comprises electronic files that include groups of terms for expanding a query entered by a user by;

- a) comparing key terms entered by the user as part of the query to the electronic files; and
- b) adding to the query all terms in at least one group that contains at least one of the key terms to provide an expanded query containing both entered terms and unentered terms.

29. A system as in claim 28 wherein the electronic files include dictionaries, thesauri, and authority files.

30. A system as in claim 29 wherein the authority files include groups of related terms for expanding a query entered by a user to include unentered terms relevant to entered terms.

31. The method of claim 28 wherein all of the terms contained within each individual group of terms are pre-determined to be related to each other.

31. A system as in claim 27 wherein the computer network is accessed using a personal computer.